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# *Citizens' Troubleshooter*

*City of San Jose, California*

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## EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

**Police** 297-3565

**Fire and Rescue** 294-4664

## INTRODUCTION

San Jose is a busy, growing city. As a resident or homeowner in San Jose, you will probably have need for some of the many services which are provided by the City's public and private agencies. Some of these services you may not know about, and others are hard to find. This booklet will guide you to the proper City department and telephone number so that you can easily find the services you need.

The essence of a livable neighborhood is neighborly cooperation. If you have a neighborhood problem, first try to find out who is responsible for the condition. Talk to him and give him time to act. If this does not work, then go to the City.

Always give the City time to act on your request for service. Then, if you get no action, check back to find out why. There may be a good reason for the delay.

If you need more information on the proper number to call, phone **277-4000**.

## Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is a spokesman and mediator for people with grievances against City of San Jose government. If you feel an agency or official of the city government has dealt with you unfairly, you should take your complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman functions as simply, informally and rapidly as possible. He will look at both sides of an argument and seek some negotiable point. If negotiation proves impossible, he will conduct a thorough investigation and initiate action whenever warranted. The Ombudsman is located at City Hall on the first floor annex. Phone **277-4896**.

## Government (Speak Out)

The City of San Jose encourages its citizens to offer suggestions that might improve City operations . . . commend City employees when the citizen feels the employee has done a particularly good job, or to voice a legitimate complaint. A special mail-back form called "Speak Out" is available for this purpose and may be picked up at the Information Center at City Hall or at any of the City's libraries.

## What's Happening in Your Neighborhood

If you have any questions regarding your neighborhood and its present or future plans, you may inquire at the City of San Jose Planning Department, Room 400, City Hall, Annex or call **277-5175**.

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**Building Permits**

In order to insure that all work done on a home is in accordance with the standards for safety set forth by the City of San Jose, it is necessary to obtain a building permit. The permit must be obtained before starting any work. Application for a permit should be made to Property and Code Enforcement (Building Div.) Room 200, City Hall Annex.

Homeowners may also obtain plumbing permits and electrical permits themselves to work on the single-family home they occupy, upon demonstrating knowledge of the work to be done. You may obtain these permits in the same manner. The fees are nominal.

If you have any questions as to whether or not a permit is necessary, call one of the following numbers to obtain information about the City requirements.

Building Inspection, **277-4541.**

Electrical Inspection, **277-4354.**

Plumbing and Inspection, **277-4581.**

If you believe that legal requirements are not being met, or someone is doing illegal work, call the Code Compliance Section at **277-4527.**

**Streets**

The City is responsible for maintaining all City streets. If your street has dangerous areas or is rough riding the City will send a crew to perform necessary work. Call the Street Repair section, Department of Public Works, **277-4881.** The City has a regularly established program for maintaining worn-out streets, and will send an inspector to determine whether your street should be on the list. If your

street has never been improved to city standards, the City will still maintain it, but at a limited level. If you and your neighbors should wish to have permanent pavement and curbs and sidewalks installed in an unimproved street, the City will help you form an assessment district. The property owners along the street must bear part of the cost of such construction. Write the Director of Public Works, City Hall, 801 North First Street, San Jose, California 95110.

**Sidewalk/Curb and Gutter Repair**

The property owner is responsible for keeping the sidewalks in front of his property in good repair. If you are a tenant or a neighbor, first call a broken sidewalk to the attention of the landlord. If the repairs are not made, call the Sidewalk Inspection Division of the Public Works Department, **277-4881.** If an on-site inspection indicates the necessity for repairs, the City will issue a notice calling for the repair of hazardous conditions. If dangerous curb and gutter conditions exist, also call **277-4881.**

**Crime Confidential—Tell it privately (TIP) program.**

The "Crime Confidential" program enables citizens with non-Emergency crime information to contact the Police Department while remaining anonymous. The program is viewed as an additional communications link between the citizens and police, always an area of great concern.

Citizens wishing to contact the police regarding Non-Emergency crime and/or criminal activity without becoming personally involved may phone **277-5555.** The information received will be logged and routed to the appropriate police division for follow-up work.

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## Water

The major portion of San Jose is provided water by the San Jose Water Works, **279-7900**, a private utility. The City does operate the water systems in Alviso and the Evergreen area (San Jose Municipal Water System) **277-4036**. Other water companies serving the San Jose area include: Great Oaks Water Co., **227-9540**; San Jose Highlands Co., **998-8087**; Campbell Water Co., **378-7377**. There are, in addition, several small cooperatives providing water for their individual area. To report water leaks in the street, call the water department serving you.

The property owner, however, is responsible for repair of all leaks which occur on his property. If a house is unoccupied, or if the owner or landlord refuses to repair a leak which may endanger other property, the water company involved should be notified.

The Public Works Department is responsible for the repair of leaky fire hydrants. Call **277-4881**.

## Gas Leaks

If you smell gas . . . either indoors or out in the street . . . call the Customer Service Department of the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, any time of the day or night, at **288-6121**. If the leak is so severe as to pose a danger of imminent fire or explosion, call the Fire Department, **294-4664**.

## Sewers

The property owner is responsible for the maintenance and repair of plumbing and sewer lines inside his building and out to the main sewer in the street. If a property owner is having problems with his plumbing and suspects the reason is a blockage of the sewer main on the street, he may call the Department of Public Works, **277-4881**, and the Department will send a crew to determine whether or not the main is clear. If it is determined that the main sewer line at the street is clear, the property owner will be so advised and at the same time will be notified of the proper procedures for obtaining necessary repairs. If your sewer backs up and the landlord is unwilling to fix it, call a housing sanitarian at the Property and Code Enforcement Housing Inspection Division. Call **277-4504**.

## Storm Sewer Stoppage . . . Curb Inlet Stoppage

During a rainstorm, water may rise over the curb and go onto private property. Such a problem should be reported to the Public Works Operations Department, **277-4881**. A crew will be dispatched to clean the storm sewer. These stoppages generally occur during the first storm of the season when leaves and other debris clog the inlets. A property owner may help by keeping his gutter clean of debris and refraining from sweeping leaves into curb inlets.

## Traffic Hazards

The City will investigate potential traffic hazards and attempt to provide a solution to safety problems. These hazards include visibility problems, inadequate signing, maneuverability, street striping, and installation of detour-routing signs for construction jobs. Call Transportation Operations, **277-4304**.

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## Street Signs

Street sign will be replaced if damaged or missing. Call the Public Works Department . . . Operations Branch, **277-4881**.

## Traffic Signals

A citizen may report a malfunctioning traffic signal to either the Police Department or Public Works Department at any time of the day or night by calling, **277-4881**.

## Street Lights

Street lights within the City of San Jose, which are located on metal poles, are maintained by the City Public Works Department, but those located on Pacific Gas and Electric Company wood poles are maintained by Pacific Gas and Electric. If a citizen has a burned-out street light in his neighborhood, he may determine which agency to call by viewing the street light pole. Please note the street address and number painted on the street light pole. For street lights mounted on metal poles call the City Public Works Department at **277-4881**, during normal business hours. For those lights mounted on wood poles call Pacific Gas and Electric at **288-6121**.

## Street Cleaning

Clean sidewalks and streets are important in making a neighborhood an enjoyable place to live. Keeping sidewalks clean is the responsibility of the property owner. Unfortunately, some people carry out this responsibility by simply sweeping dirt into the street. Not only is this against the law, it is self defeating as well, because more often than not the wind will blow the dirt and papers right back. The Department of Public Works Street Sanitation Division

cleans main arterials, commercial areas, and bike lanes in the city on a regularly scheduled basis. They are also responsible for emptying the street trash receptacles which are placed for the convenience of pedestrians. If you have questions or complaints about the street cleaning program, call the Public Works Department Street Sanitation Division, **277-4881**. If a storm drain grating in the curb should become clogged with debris, call the Public Works Department Sewer Maintenance Division at **277-4881**.

## Illegally Parked Vehicles and Trucks

Vehicles abandoned on the street should be reported to the Police Department. Phone **277-4000**. A police officer must mark and document that the vehicle remains stationary for at least 72 hours before the vehicle can be towed. If someone parks a car so as to block your driveway, call the police at **277-4000** so that the Police Department can authorize removal of the vehicle. Commercial vehicles 10,000 lbs. or greater G.V.W. rating may not be parked on a residential street, exceptions are made for loading, unloading, building, etc. **277-4000** should be called for enforcement by citation. Areas that contain a combination of residential and business enterprises or open areas may not be subject to this ordinance.

## Injured or Stray Animals

San Jose has a leash law . . . owners must keep their animals fenced or on a leash at all times.

If you see an injured, lost or stray animal call the Santa Clara County Health Department Animal Control Division at **279-6075**. The City of San Jose contracts with the County to provide these services. If you are bitten by an animal, or observe a vicious animal which might pose a threat to your neighborhood, call **279-6075**.

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### Licensing Pets

The City requires that every dog over four months old be licensed each year. You may apply for a license at the Santa Clara County Health Department Animal Control Division, 800 Thornton Way, San Jose. Proof that the animal has had rabies shots must accompany the application for license. Innoculation clinics are held once each month at 2220 Moorpark, and occasional clinics are held at special locations. Those clinics are advertised in advance. Rabies shots may also be acquired from a veterinarian. For information, call **279-6075**.

### Lost Pets

Owners of lost pets should come in person to the Humane Society Animal Shelter at 2530 Lafayette St., Santa Clara, to inspect impounded animals. The shelter is open from 12 noon until 4 p.m. Sunday . . . closed Monday . . . open from 11 a.m. until 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, call **279-6100**.

### Spay or Neuter Clinics

The County also provides a spay and neuter clinic open for those who wish to use this facility for their pet dog or cat. Payment must be made in advance at County Animal Control, 800 Thornton Way, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. For information, call **279-6105**.

### Bees

The keeping of bees (apiaries) in San Jose is controlled by City ordinance. Any questions or problems concerning bee keeping should be referred to Code Compliance, **277-4527**. For bee swarms on private property, the property owner should contact a pest control company.

### Dead Animal Removal

Dead animals are removed by the County Health Department's Animal Control Division. A citizen may report observing a dead animal by calling **279-6100**. If on a freeway or on ramp, call Div. of Highways, **277-1214**.

### Barking Dogs

The citizen bothered by (an habitually) barking dog should obtain the name and address of the dog owner. A complaint should then be lodged with Property & Code Enforcement, (Code Compliance Division) at **277-4527**, noting the nature of the complaint. A staff member will investigate the complaint and, if warranted, will issue an official warning to the dog owner to control the dog.

If a violation persists and additional complaints are received, the complainant is advised to compose a petition declaring that the dog is creating a neighborhood nuisance by its habitual barking. He then obtains a minimum of two additional signatures from homeowners who live in the immediate vicinity of the dog owner. This petition is then mailed to Code Compliance.

On receipt of the petition a "Public Nuisance Letter" is sent from the City Attorney's Office to the dog owner (with a copy to the original complainant) informing him that he is in violation of a City ordinance and legal action will be instituted if the violation persists.

On receipt of additional complaints, the dog owner and those signing the petition, together with any other persons they might choose to have attend, are invited to a meeting in the Code Compliance Office to attempt to resolve the problem.

If the problem is not then resolved, a citation is given to the dog owner. The dog owner can then either plead guilty or not guilty to the charge of violation.

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## **Weeds and Litter**

In order for the residents of a neighborhood to be proud of it, the surroundings must be attractive. Nothing destroys neighborhood pride as quickly as vacant lots filled with weeds and trash. Property owners are responsible for keeping their land and buildings free of weeds and litter. If your neighborhood is troubled by weeds which cause a nuisance or a potential fire hazard, you may call the Weed Abatement Section of the San Jose City Fire Department at **277-4492**. The Department will send an inspector to determine the extent of the problem and, if warranted, issue a Weed Abatement Notice to the property owner. In cases of non-compliance with the notice, or at the request of the property owner, the City will remove the fire hazard, billing the property owner the cost of removal. The bill is normally sent with the Property Tax bill.

Neighborhood eyesores caused by trash or debris on private property are normally handled in much the same manner as weed abatement. The property owner has the responsibility for maintaining his property. A property owner who does not maintain his property free of refuse and litter will be issued a notice to do so. If he fails to comply with the notice, the City will hire a private contractor to remove the refuse, with the property owner being billed for the services.

## **Street Trees**

The property owner is responsible for the repair and upkeep of the sidewalks, curbs, and parking strip, along with the trimming or removal of street trees planted on the property or park strip. The City cooperates with homeowners and other groups by providing trees for approved beautification projects. Services or additional information about street trees may be obtained from the Public Works Department Landscape Architecture Division, **277-4881**.

## **Garbage and Trash Collection**

In San Jose, "refuse" collection is contracted for with Browning-Ferris, Inc. Every dwelling unit is

required by law to have regular refuse collection service.

Users are allowed three 32-gallon metal or plastic containers, or plastic disposal bags, which must be placed at the curb in front of the premises the night before collection. (Each container can not exceed 60 pounds when full.) Refuse need not be separated. Although only curb-side collection service is provided at the regular collection rate, on-premise collection will be provided for a special fee. Customers wishing that service should call Browning-Ferris, Inc., and make the necessary financial arrangements for that level of service. In those cases where a customer can prove he is physically handicapped and unable to move the cans to the curb, and at the same time can prove financial inability to afford on-premise collection, the customer may apply to the City of San Jose Code Compliance Division for an exemption from curbside requirements. Phone **277-4527**.

Complaints regarding service should be directed to Browning-Ferris, Inc., **263-9770**, or the City of San Jose Code Compliance Division, **277-4527**.

## **Stolen Bicycles**

Bicycles are required to have a license in the City of San Jose. The license should be acquired within five days after purchase of the bicycle and may be obtained at any City Fire Station. The cost is three dollars and the license is good for three years. If a bicycle is stolen, the theft should be reported immediately to the Police Department. Phone **277-4484**.

If a theft is occurring at the time the call is made, phone **297-3565**.

Stolen bicycles recovered by the Police Department are kept for at least 90 days and after that period of time will be auctioned off if not reclaimed by the owner. The City Purchasing Department auctions unclaimed bicycles four times each year.

## **Parking Boats and House Trailers**

The Property & Code Enforcement, Code Compliance Division is responsible for the enforcement of the Codes which prohibits the parking or storing of boats, unmounted campers and motor vehicles other than passenger cars or pickup trucks for more than 72 hours in the front setback area in a residential zone. Violations may be reported by phoning **277-4527**.



## **Housing Authority**

The Housing Authority of Santa Clara County helps to provide housing for low-income families where housing might not otherwise be available: individuals or families displaced by government action, the elderly or disabled. The Housing Authority presently administers Section 8 Housing Assistance (Rental Payments) Program. For further information call the Housing Authority at **275-8770**.

## **Housing Information**

The Housing Service Center is a project for City residents and it offers a wide variety of services. Part of the services include assisting low or moderate income families locate housing within San Jose and credit counseling for low income families.

Free Tenant/Landlord law classes are provided for the public (tenants and landlords) on a monthly basis. Some of the topics are: evictions, deposits, utility shut-offs, lock-outs, abandonments, repairs, habitability, rent raises and discrimination. Intended to prevent potential tenant/landlord problems arising through misunderstanding and misinformation.

Stop by 380 N. First Street, or call **287-2464**.

## **Tenant-Landlord Relations**

Tenant and Landlord Relations is composed of the chairman, five tenant representatives and five landlord representatives, all of whom are volunteering their time to mediate landlord and tenant problems existing within the City of San Jose. Its goal is to strengthen good relationships between the two. The Committee was set up by the City of San Jose for this purpose. The telephone number is **287-4467**, and the location is 380 N. First Street, suite 210.

## **Housing Rehabilitation**

The City of San Jose has an effective housing rehabilitation program for selected residential neighborhoods. This program offers grants and low-interest loans to property owners who are interested in improving their homes by repairing hazardous

and deteriorated conditions such as roofs, electrical systems, plumbing, etc. Free services include inspection, cost estimates, architectural service, if needed, and assistance with the obtaining of qualified contractors.

For further information contact the Property & Code Enforcement, Housing Division at **277-4747**.

## **Relocation Policies**

Because the City is constantly undergoing growth, and some areas are being renewed through the Redevelopment Agency, businesses and homes are sometimes required to be moved or demolished. The City has a relocation program designed to aid persons displaced from their homes or businesses. These programs are based on the Federal and State relocation regulations. Homeowners, renters and business people displaced by City projects are eligible to benefit from the relocation services. The programs pay moving expenses, dislocation allowances, replacement costs for owner or tenant and moving costs for home, business or farm. If you are being displaced because of a City project, you may call the City Relocation Division, **277-5151**, for further information.

## **Multiple Dwellings**

All multiple dwellings . . . hotels, motels, apartment houses, etc. . . . must have a permit of occupancy issued by Property & Code Enforcement (Housing Inspection). The buildings are inspected annually to insure that their use complies with the rules of their permit. The inspection is to make certain the building is maintained and used in the proper manner, and that it is not occupied by an excessive number of persons. If a citizen has reason to believe that a multiple dwelling is being misused, he may call Property & Code Enforcement (Housing Inspection). The Department will investigate the complaint. Call **277-4504**.

## **Vacant and Hazardous Buildings**

If you see an abandoned building which poses a potential hazard, report it to Code Compliance Division by phoning **277-4527**. The City will then investigate and may order the building to be securely boarded-up and made safe. A building or weed condition which appears to be a potential fire hazard should be reported to the Fire Prevention Bureau, phone **277-4656**.



This booklet has been prepared by the City of San Jose Public Information Center to help you solve your neighborhood problems. It tells you where to call, what to ask for, and what to do yourself. If you have a neighbor who speaks only Spanish, he can get information and assistance in solving a wide variety of problems by calling the City Hall Information Desk, at **277-4233**.

Esta libreta fué preparada por la oficina de Información Pública de la Ciudad de San José para ayudar a usted a resolver los problemas en su vecindario. El libro tiene información de dónde llamar, qué preguntas puede hacer, e instrucciones en que puede hacer usted mismo. Si usted o su vecino hablan solamente español, pueden adquirir información y ayuda para resolver sus problemas con solo llamar las oficinas de la Ciudad de San José al número de teléfono **277-4233**.

### **MAYOR'S HOTLINE**

*As a means of keeping up with concern of San Jose residents' problems or suggestions, the Mayor has a telephone Hot Line in operation 24 hours a day.*

**DIAL 297-CITY**

### **Community Events**

The Community Services Desk at the San Jose Public Library, 180 W. San Carlos, provides information about coming events in the County covering the area of music, theater, lectures, sports and others. Call **277-4818**. You may also visit the Community Services Desk and pick up a monthly Cultural Events Calendar, a monthly Library Events Calendar, or check the bulletin boards for additional information on coming events.

### **Shut-In Service**

Free library service, including book delivery to the homebound is offered by the Special Outreach Services staff of the San Jose Public Library, 180 W. San Carlos. Persons who are physically handicapped, elderly, ill, blind or partially sighted are eligible. Referral information on community services for shut-ins is provided. Phone **277-4834**.

### **Reference Center**

San Jose Public Library maintains a Reference Center which provides information access to all library networks, to the collection of the California State Library and query service to Stanford University. Patrons are referred to the Reference Center by librarians at San Jose Public Library and by librarians at cooperating libraries. Phone **277-4815**.

**For the Latest Information  
On What to See and Do  
in San Jose**

**PHONE  
293-HOST**